

Dateline DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

A Message from the Secretary

I would like to open by saying how wonderful it is to return as Secretary of DHMH, and to thank everyone who has wished me well on my return. It is an honor and pleasure to once again serve as Secretary.



One of the reasons I agreed to come back is the great respect I have for the Department and the quality and dedication of the people who work here.

As you all know, there are a number of challenges confronting our administrations. Accordingly, there are expectations I have of you.

Primary among the challenges is the extremely difficult fiscal reality that Maryland faces. As we strive to address this issue, we need to remember that we can't forget those struggling in these tough times. We are here to help people cope with their many problems, and we have an obligation to make sure these problems do not become overwhelming or burdensome obstacles.

We must also realize we have to live within the realities of our budget, and to set priorities for the services we offer. Unfortunately, we have limited funding, so we must ensure the most vulnerable come first.

And while we need to look at the big picture, let's not lose sight of each person we serve. It is not bad to sweat the small stuff.

Even though our resources are slim, we need to act with a sense of urgency — to be responsive when people come to us with very serious or life-threatening situations.

This has to be done with a sense of humanity. When we hear about a problem, we need to keep

in mind the reaction we would expect if a similar situation directly affected us or our families.

In short, we need to treat people the same way we would expect to be treated.

Again, it is great to be back. I look forward to renewing old relationships and establishing new ones. Working together, we can meet and beat the challenges we face. And in return, I promise you I will strive to ensure our hard work is recognized.

Thank you.

DHMH Receives \$114 Million MCHP Grant

Maryland is the recipient of more than \$114 million in federal funds for the Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP). DHMH received this federal grant in early April, less than two weeks after Governor Ehrlich wrote to Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson requesting the additional dollars.

"This is a huge win for our kids," Governor Ehrlich stated. "The Bush Administration's grant is about ensuring that children in need continue to receive the care they deserve, even in tight fiscal times."

Maryland is one of only 14 states to receive funds through this latest award. The funds come from unexpended allotments to other states awarded during federal fiscal year 2000. The grant is awarded through the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Maryland would have run out of MCHP funds by August of this year and additional federal MCHP funds would have been unavailable until the start of the next federal fiscal year, which begins in October.

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MCHP Grant

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This reallocation provides Maryland with enough federal funding to carry the program well into calendar year 2004.

"We were facing a situation where we would have had to create a deficit or cut back on program services," Secretary Sabatini said. "So this is a win-win situation — these dollars prevent a deficit and children continue to get health care."

No formula was in place to redistribute unexpended funds that were allocated in federal fiscal year 2000. The Governor's letter, co-signed by Governors from Alaska, New Jersey and Rhode Island, urged Secretary Thompson to begin redistribution of the unexpended funds. The Secretary responded with this 'interim' redistribution, which is allotting over \$1 billion to the eligible states and territories, including the \$114 million to Maryland. Only New York State will receive more funding under the reallocation.

MCHP, and a related program called MCHP Premium, provide health insurance for children through age 18 in families with incomes up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level.

Beware of Rabies



If spring weather takes your family outdoors for work and play, be on the lookout for wild animals — they could be carrying rabies. May is **Rabies Awareness Month** in Maryland, and health officials are warning residents that rabid

animals have been found in every county in the State, even in city environments.

Raccoons are the most frequent carrier of rabies in Maryland, followed by skunks, foxes, bats, cats and groundhogs. With the exception of groundhogs, these species are generally nocturnal, feeding and prowling at night. So if you see a raccoon or skunk in your yard during daylight hours, it could mean the animal has rabies.

And it's not just wild animals that carry the deadly viral disease. Cats are the fourth most common animal testing positive for rabies in Maryland, and they are the number one domestic animal species. Cats are also the domestic animal most likely to be unvaccinated and have frequent contact with humans. Generally, wild animals and even unfamiliar cats should not be approached — a guideline especially important for young children, who may be tempted to try to pet or pick up animals.

Bats with rabies pose a risk to humans since they can roost in attics, behind shutters and in other sheltered areas of homes and buildings, increasing the chance of contact with humans. Rabid bats can also bite and infect cats, dogs and other mammals. Even though not all bats carry rabies, if you find a bat in your house, don't immediately release it. Contact your local health department to find out what you should do.

You can reduce the risk of contact with bats by using bird netting, fly screening, sheet metal, or caulking compounds to close or cover openings along roofs and vents that allow bats to enter. Before batproofing, make sure there are no bats, especially young ones, already inside the attic.

Wounds from animal bites require careful attention. If you are bitten by a suspicious animal, wild or tame, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water and get medical attention immediately. If possible, capture the animal so it can be observed or sent to a laboratory for rabies testing. Then, contact your doctor and county health department right away.

If your pet has been in a fight with a wild animal, special precautions are also necessary. Wear gloves to handle your pet, and isolate it from other animals and people. Contact your local health department for more information on what to do. You may be instructed to bring your pet to your local veterinarian for a rabies booster shot.

The best protection for your pets and your family is to keep your pets' rabies vaccinations up-to-date. Maryland regulations require all dog, cat and ferret owners to have their pets adequately vaccinated against rabies. Rabies vaccinations must be repeated every one to three years, depending on the age of your pet and the type of vaccine used. Contact your local health department for a listing of upcoming rabies clinics in your area.

Editor's Note: Thanks to Tara Snyder, Community Health Educator in the Center of Health Promotion, Education and Tobacco Prevention, for writing this article.

Michael R. Carter

DHMH expresses deep condolences to the family and co-workers of

Michael R. Carter,
who passed away on

March 30.

Mr. Carter

served as director of the

DHMH Office of

Community Relations from 1983 until the time of his death.

As director, he

oversaw a variety of

programs that provide health services for minorities

and women and help for minority businesses.

Take Steps to Achieve Optimal Blood Pressure



Most of us have heard of high blood pressure (also known as hypertension), a consistent blood pressure of 140/90 or above. Having high blood pressure increases a person's risk of death and disability from heart disease, stroke, congestive heart failure, and kidney failure.

Even "high normal" blood pressure increases risk. The Framingham study, a long-term heart disease study, has shown that cardiovascular risk associated with high blood pressure increases gradually, even before

hypertension occurs. Taking steps to change your lifestyle can help you achieve "optimal" blood pressure, defined as a systolic (top number) less than 120 and a diastolic (bottom number) less than 80.

Proven ways to lower blood pressure are:

Increase your physical activity

— Even people who are not hypertensive can reduce blood pressure by being regularly active. Get a step counter and increase the number of steps you take with an ultimate goal of 10,000 steps a day.

Achieve and maintain a healthy weight — Participants in one study significantly lowered their blood pressure by losing an average of only eight pounds.

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Calendar of Events

Tuesday, April 29 — *Breakfast*

Meeting: MCI — Mild

Cognitive Impairment;

Somerford Place, Columbia, Maryland; 8:30 - 10:00 a.m. Sponsored by the Dementia Care Consortium of the Alzheimer's Association. Phone 410-561-9099 or 1-800-443-CARE for more information.

Tuesday, April 29 — **Governor's 10th Annual Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect;** Baltimore

Convention Center; 9:00 a.m. - 4:45 p.m. Sponsored by the Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families; \$100. More information is available on the Internet at www.ocyf.state.md.us (Click on "latest news," then click on "upcoming events - conference.")

Wednesday, April 30; **Workshop: Critical Issues in Adolescent Substance Abuse: When an Immovable Object Meets an Irresistible Force;** University of Maryland School of Social Work; 8:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.

\$120, approved for Category I continuing education credits.

Phone 410-706-1839 for more information.

Saturday, May 3 — **Health Freedom Walk: A Path to Wellness;**

St. Mary's Park (Druid Hill Avenue and Paca Street), Baltimore; \$10. Registration 7:30 a.m., Walk begins at 9:00 a.m. Sponsored by the Community Health and Awareness Monitoring Program (C.H.A.M.P.), this 6-K walk makes creative use of Baltimore's integral role in the Underground Railroad and will honor those who walked for freedom and those who assisted in the struggle.



Optimal Blood Pressure

(Continued)

Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and low fat dairy products and consume less sodium, found in food primarily as table salt — The DASH study (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) showed that for those with hypertension, making these dietary changes had a significant reduction in their blood pressure. Those without hypertension also showed a reduced blood pressure.

Teach you children well — This step won't reduce your blood pressure, but your children will have a better chance to maintain optimal blood pressure when you provide them with the skills and knowledge to develop good eating and activity habits. It can also give you the incentive you need to make family changes for a lifetime of cardiovascular health. Read stories about real people with high blood pressure and how they made changes to lower their blood pressure, at the National High Blood Pressure Education Web site at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/real/real.htm.

For a booklet about increasing fruit and vegetable intake, a good first step to lowering blood pressure, e-mail goodheart@dnhm.state.md.us and request a copy of **Energizing Tips for a Healthier Family**. For a StairWELL Kit with posters for display near the elevators to encourage stair use, contact the Education Materials Distribution Center at 410-799-1940.

Editor's Note: Thanks to the staff in the Family Health Administration's Division of Cardiovascular Health and Nutrition for writing this article.

CPR Classes

The following CPR classes are available to DHMH employees. Listed below are course descriptions and a CPR schedule. Please contact your Unit Registration Coordinator for enrollment information.

CPR/First Aid/Defibrillation

The American Red Cross will teach new updated First Aid, CPR and use of automated external defibrillator (AED) for victims of sudden cardiac arrest. Employees will learn skills based on the latest research findings and best emergency practices. Certification validity: First Aid is good for three years; Adult CPR/AED is good for one year. Who Attends: Any Headquarters employees, option program. *Maximum Classroom Enrollment: 10; Instructor: American Red Cross.*

CPR Re-Certification Employees have the opportunity to re-certify their credentials in CPR/Defibrillation.

Maximum Classroom Enrollment: 10; Instructor: American Red Cross.

CPR for the Professional Rescuer

This is a nine-hour course that teaches a variety of skills including one- and two-rescuer CPR, use of resuscitation masks and bag-valve masks for ventilating victims, and how to respond in special rescue situations such as drowning.

Maximum Classroom Enrollment: 10; Instructor: American Red Cross.



First Aid/Defibrillation and Recertification classes are as follows:

Tuesday, May 6 — CPR/First Aid/Defibrillation, O'Connor Building Room L-1, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday, May 27 — CPR Recertification, O'Connor Building Room L-1, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, June 11 — CPR/First Aid/Defibrillation, O'Connor Building Room L-1, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, June 25 — CPR Recertification, O'Connor Building Room L-1, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.



STATE OF MARYLAND

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Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.
Governor
Michael S. Steele
Lieutenant Governor
Nelson J. Sabatini
Secretary, DHMH
Karen Black
Director of Public Relations
John Hammond
Editor

DHMH Office of Public Relations
201 West Preston Street, Room 506
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
Phone: 410-767-6490
FAX: 410-333-7525
TTY: 1-800-735-2258

To contribute to **Dateline DHMH** or for further information, contact John Hammond, Office of Public Relations, 410-767-6490, hammondj@dnhm.state.md.us. Please visit our Web site at www.dnhm.state.md.us.